

I oppose loosening the rules designed to promote and protect diversity of media ownership. These rules were adopted to ensure that the public would receive a diverse range of viewpoints from the media, and not simply the opinions of a handful of media conglomerates.

That government intervention may at times be necessary to preserve the competition essential to a free market is a principle which has been recognized in our nation's laws since the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890. In the realm of communications media, this principle takes on an added urgency. The prevention of media monopolies is essential not only to preserve free economic competition, but also to preserve freedom of the press.

As Justice Hugo Black wrote for the Supreme Court in *Associated Press v. United States* (1945), "the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources is essential to the welfare of the public," and is the basic assumption on which First Amendment freedom of the press rests; indeed, it is a "condition of a free society." Justice Black ruled that the negative First Amendment prohibition on government action infringing upon freedom of the press implies a positive responsibility on the part of the government to take action to protect the freedom of the press when necessary.

The media ownership rules currently under review are both necessary and prudent measures to achieve the end of protecting media diversity. Rather than being scaled back, these rules should be strengthened.